

Autumn Worden are students of Summerville High School and the Connections Visual and Performing Arts Academy. This educational facility was established 10 years ago on the Summerville campus to support the interests of students in visual and performing arts. Jazz @ 8 is directed by Madeline Young, the vocal music and drama director and teacher. Throughout the school year, this group performs at many community and school events, including parades, veteran ceremonies, luncheons for service groups, benefit dinners, and at local football and basketball games.

The invitation to perform in Washington D.C. was a distinguished honor, and the students rehearsed every day to prepare. Accompanying the group to Washington, D.C. was Diana Harford, Principal of the Connections Visual and Performing Arts Academy and David Urquhart, Principal of Summerville High School. The Tuolumne County community, which is a small, rural community in the Sierra Nevada foothills of central California, was enormously generous and supportive of the students, the program and the school, providing the entire funding for the students to be able to make this once in a lifetime trip. In a very short amount of time, generous contributions ranging from \$20 to over \$6,000 were received to raise the \$20,000 to cover all the costs for the four-day trip. Large donors include Summerville High School Foundation, Sonora Area Foundation, Black Hats, and Black Oak Casino.

In addition to the tree lighting performance, the talented group of young adults performed at the White House for two hours during public tours and the Library of Congress during the 2011 Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony reception hosted by the California State Society and sponsored by Southern California Edison.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and commending the Summerville High School Jazz @ 8 Advanced Jazz Choir on this accomplishment, and for representing the city and county of Tuolumne in such a positive light.

RECOGNIZING DANIEL MAUGHAN, BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA HEROISM AWARD RECIPIENT

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to recognize Daniel Maughan of Euless, Texas, for receiving the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Heroism Award. The Heroism Award is the third-highest award presented by BSA for lifesaving and meritorious action. This award is reserved for individuals who have demonstrated heroism and skill in saving or attempting to save a life. Since the award's inception in 1923, Boy Scouts of America has only awarded approximately 3,500 recipients this distinguished honor.

On May 15, 2011, Daniel's father, Mike Maughan, Ph.D., suffered a heart attack due to an unknown blood clot that quickly traveled to his pulmonary artery. In an act of heroism, Daniel performed CPR on his father, sustaining his life until paramedics arrived on scene. Due to the trauma caused by the blood

clot, Mike later passed away with his family by his side. Mike was an avid supporter of the Boy Scouts and a mentor to many young men in scouting.

Daniel has earned numerous Boy Scout honors including the rank of Eagle Scout—the highest rank in the Boy Scout organization—and the Silver Palm. Currently, Daniel is a freshman at the Milwaukee School of Engineering, where he is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in mechanical engineering and is a member of the rowing team.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to represent a hero like Daniel. I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring Daniel for his courageous acts of bravery.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, on January 26, 1995, when the last attempt at a balanced budget amendment passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 300–132, the national debt was \$4,801,405,175,294.28.

Today, it is \$15,099,497,460,357.58. We've added \$10,298,092,285,063.30 dollars to our debt in 16 years. This is \$10 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

INTRODUCING THE AFFORDABLE MORTGAGE FOR HOMEOWNERS ACT

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Affordable Mortgage for Homeowners Act. This bill would reduce the interest rate on all mortgages owned or guaranteed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac to the current—and more affordable—interest rate, which averages four percent.

As our nation is recovering from the worst recession and housing crisis in decades, millions of homeowners continue to struggle to make their mortgage payments and keep their homes. Approximately 22 percent or 10.7 million of homeowners owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth. In 2011, two million households received a foreclosure filing. Furthermore, the total mortgage debt overhang in the United States approaches \$700 billion dollars. The state of Florida is by far one of the hardest hit regions in the country.

During the height of the subprime mortgage crisis in 2008, many recognized that it was the predatory lending practices of mortgage lenders that pushed millions of homeowners to purchase homes they could not afford. Today, millions of responsible homeowners have underwater mortgages, because of these unscrupulous lending practices and declining home values. I refuse to let American families struggle through no fault of their own.

While the U.S. government has established programs to help homeowners who are both current and in default on their mortgages, it has not been enough. Indeed, many households did not qualify for these programs or were not aware of their existence. My bill will fix this problem by requiring Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to reduce the interest rate on all the mortgages they own to the current interest rate, which averages four percent. Homeowners who have a better mortgage product or want to opt out will be exempted. My bill is the first program that will directly help millions of homeowners and address the housing crisis comprehensively.

Mr. Speaker, homeownership is a central part of the American dream. Ensuring that people are able to maintain this critical investment is essential to achieving sustainable growth and economic development in our communities. Millions of responsible Americans continue to bear the cost of this economic crisis. I find this to be unacceptable. They deserve fair and affordable mortgages that allow them to plan for the future. This is why I urge my colleagues to take a major step towards ending the housing crisis and support this important legislation.

HONORING STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST SERVICE

HON. JEFF DENHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor Stanislaus National Forest Service for supplying the 2011 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. No season generates more enthusiasm, heightened sense of good will, deeper traditions, and economic benefits than the annual Christmas season, and the Stanislaus National Forest Service provided the single and most beautiful symbol of the season—the Christmas Tree.

This year, Speaker of the House JOHN BOEHNER hosted the tree lighting ceremony on the West Front Lawn of the United States Capitol Building on Tuesday, December 6. Seven-year-old Johnny Crawford from Sonora, California was the lucky child who flipped the switch and turned on the 10,000 LED lights that illuminated the tree.

Since 1970, it has become an honor for one of the National Forests to be asked to provide the Capitol Tree. The appointed National Forest, in turn, engages help from diverse partners throughout its respective State. The opportunity to provide the Capitol Christmas Tree becomes a state-wide celebration and civic event, leaving a lasting impression on all who are fortunate enough to be involved.

2011 is only the fourth time California has provided the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree—the last time was in 1995. Known as “The People's Tree,” the 2011 Capitol Christmas Tree was harvested from the Stanislaus National Forest located in the Central Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The Forest Service recommended 15 trees to the Superintendent of the U.S. Capitol Grounds, Ted Bechtel, in late August of 2011. He made his final decision after a good night's sleep. Several aspects are taken into account during the selection, including the shape and